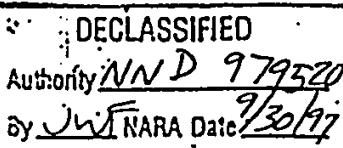


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1973/03/02



MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

March 2, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER HK
SUBJECT: Atmospherics of My Trip to
Peking

The signing of the Vietnam agreement unquestionably brought with it a conspicuous improvement in the degree of warmth with which we were received by the Chinese. They have always been cordial, but on this occasion their cordiality was not kept within a Great Wall of privacy but was made conspicuously public. As in the case of your own visit of course, the high point was my meeting with Mao Tsetung. In addition, however, there were many other nuances which suggested a definite improvement in the tone, as well as in the substance, of our relationship.

Points which come to mind in this respect are:

-- The senior PRC representative in Hong Kong saw me off when I departed for Canton. (He had previously asked our Consul-General in Hong Kong to call on him in order to receive the flight plan for this leg of my journey.)

-- Upon our arrival in Peking, we deplaned at the main terminal, as in the case of your visit, instead of at a far corner of the airfield.

-- During our drive from the airfield to the guest house compound no effort had been made to clear the streets, and we were viewed by very large numbers of Chinese.

-- When we drove through the gate of the guest house compound, an officer ordered the guards to attention and saluted. I cannot recall having seen salutes of this nature on previous visits. (This in fact happened wherever military guards were stationed as for example at the doors of the Great Hall of the People.)

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-- Chou En-lai's toast at the formal banquet given me by the PRC on the second night evoked frequent clapping by the Chinese officials present. This happened in particular whenever Chou mentioned the normalization of US-PRC relations in accordance with the Shanghai Joint Communique. (The text of Chou's toast is at Tab A.)

-- Although it is difficult to quantify the attitude of our Chinese hosts toward us, I had the distinct impression that they were more relaxed and friendly on all occasions than ever before. They frequently referred to the "old friends" who had been in China previously, and graciously referred to the "new friends" who had come for the first time.

-- The top Chinese leaders we encountered in negotiating sessions and at informal functions seemed more relaxed than on previous visits. In particular, Prime Minister Chou and Acting Defense Minister Yeh Chien-ying seemed more well-rested and in better general health than during the June visit. Vice Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua, also seemed more relaxed this visit than on previous occasions.

-- The Chinese had obviously considered very thoroughly the substantive suggestions which we had made to them in the field of trade and exchanges, and were very forthcoming indeed in working out a mutually beneficial approach on these matters. This represented a great step forward from their rather grudging consideration of trade and exchanges on previous occasions.

-- They were also very positive with respect to the establishment of Liaison Offices in Washington and Peking -- something which they had opposed before.

-- The Chinese arranged sight-seeing tours for us inside the environs of Peking in which senior PRC officials greeted us within sight of many ordinary Chinese. One such instance was a visit to a nation-wide handicrafts exhibit immediately adjacent to a major Peking hotel, in which my host was the Foreign Minister. Another (and more conspicuous) instance was a tour of the Forbidden City on a Sunday, when literally thousands of Chinese were present. My host this time was the Vice Foreign Minister. In each case it was very evident that we were expected to be seen by the average Chinese in company with senior PRC officials and in effect were being put on display.

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-- The presence of military personnel on the streets of Peking and in the rural areas seen by members of my staff (during a drive out to the Great Wall) was striking in contrast to my June trip. This fact -- confirmed by other recent visitors to Peking -- seems to be further evidence of a recent major redeployment of military units from South to North China to face the Soviet border. Other intelligence sources have suggested that these military units are being broken down into small groups and emplaced in villages throughout the northern provinces as part of the PRC's "people's war" strategy to opposing the Russian threat.

-- Also as evidence of continuing serious efforts to prepare for a possible Soviet invasion were the materials for air raid shelter construction evident throughout Peking.

-- One striking overall impression gained from my visit was the evidence that the Chinese are moving at a more rapid pace than in the past several years to orient themselves to the major nations of the West in cultural and economic terms. Their desire to remove impediments to trade with the U.S., and the attempt to develop a major export market for their traditional handicrafts -- which was said by one Chinese official to be the purpose of the handicrafts exhibit we were taken to -- indicate their serious intent to sustain their acquisition of Western technology.

-- In cultural terms, there was the unprecedented event of treating us to an evening of symphonic music, which included a Beethoven symphony, an original Chinese piano concerto, and Mao's poetry set to Western musical forms. This gives evidence of PRC interest in reaching out to the West in a way that combines acceptance of foreign material and artistic culture, but with adaptation of China's traditional culture to the modern world. This trend is all the more striking when compared to the themes of hostility to the West and China's traditional culture of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of only seven or eight years ago.

-- My visit with Mao Tsetung is covered separately, but there were two public aspects of it which were noteworthy: First, the People's Daily on the following day carried two large photographs of

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the meeting on the front page in an article which took up two-thirds of the entire page. (The remainder was devoted to the arrival of Begum Bhutto, with one small photograph.) Secondly, over ten minutes of the Peking evening television news broadcast the following day were devoted to coverage of my meeting with Mao, my arrival in Peking, and my first substantive meeting with Chou En-lai. These were the lead news items.

The people of Peking appeared more relaxed than I had been able to judge from earlier visits. Several members of my staff were able to get off our usual guest house-Great Hall of the People motorcade route to penetrate much deeper into the city, and saw a much more typical Chinese environment than ever before. Our access to the people has of course been very limited and changes if any are hard to assess, but at the least a less tense environment than we had suspected became evident on this visit. For the first time, members of the party were allowed to converse directly in Chinese with "the people" at a rural commune and to meet a presumably typical three-generation family in their simple home.

A small contingent of the party was driven through the two diplomatic compounds in Peking, and to the site of the former residence of one member, "for nostalgia's sake."

There can be no doubt from the foregoing that the Chinese wanted me to know that they were very favorably disposed toward you and your Administration following the signing of the Vietnam agreement and that a new stage had been reached in US-PRC relations. Equally important, they obviously wanted the Chinese people in general to know this as well.

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